

**Abstract 393**

**TITLE:** Developing an Empowerment Model for Women Living with HIV

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**ISSUE:** For women living with HIV, the process of empowerment can be an issue of survival. We redefine 'empowerment' as a process of awareness through which women realize their capacity to achieve individual and social changes. This process involves mental and spiritual awareness that enables women to focus on their physical, psychological and social aspects.

**SETTING:** The intervention is offered in the setting of a multidisciplinary clinic.

**PROJECT:** We have designed an empowerment intervention to guide women through several stages of awareness, each with consequent behavioral changes. We have developed a pilot instrument to measure empowerment. This instrument includes relevant areas such as: self-efficacy, decision-making, hope, optimism, self-revelation, self-efficacy, perception of social support, adherence and lifestyles.

**RESULTS:** Pilot data on this instrument will be presented.

**LESSONS LEARNED:** The multidisciplinary clinic facilitates the intervention and provides a safe space from which to deal and practice. A participant can then translate the style of empowered relationship attained within the clinic context into her personal life. Other behavior changes occur as a consequence of this empowerment process, such as lifestyle changes, adherence to HIV treatments and the establishment of new relationships. Safer sexual practices are attained much later in the process.

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